

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

FARM PAPER LETTER

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Rm. 407-A
(202) 447-5480
Washington, D.C. 20250

Office of
Information

2180

November 23, 1984

NEW HONEY BEE AT USDA IS TIDIER HOUSEKEEPER AND TWICE AS EFFICIENT

Everybody knows honey bees work hard. Trouble is, some bees are so busy with their careers that their housekeeping is lousy. This cuts into the highly productive labor bees do. So scientists have been trying to get the bees to clean up their act, and they now believe they have found a way to do that at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Because unkempt hives can lead to the death of the honey-makers and pollinators from disease, this news means better health for the bees. It also comes as good news to farmers and city dwellers alike. For, as they fly from plant to plant, honey bees make honey and housewax worth \$140 million annually. They also pollinate nearly \$19 billion worth of food and fiber crops in the United States each year, says Marshall D. Levin, director of the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tucson, Ariz.

"We have bred honey bees that are twice as tidy as others," says Martha A. Gilliam, a microbiologist with the Tucson bee research center.

A weak point in the honey bee's housekeeping habits has been sloppiness in removing dead and dying bees from the hive. After breeding three generations of bees, Gilliam came up with a breed that apparently solves the problem.

"Our goal is to reduce chalkbrood disease, which weakens and kills honey bee colonies," said Gilliam. "Chalkbrood is a fungus that is spread to healthy larvae within the hive by infected and dying bees."

Gilliam and entomologist Stephen Taber III, knew that bees could inherit the neat housekeeping trait. They found that a new brand of honey bee removed all of its dead within 24 hours. Poor housekeepers took 48 to 72 hours.

Chalkbrood has killed 50% of some bee colonies, ruining some beekeepers.

Beekeepers first reported infested colonies in North America in 1968. It may be in every state and Canadian province, plus Mexico. Japan is the latest country to report infestations.

Gilliam says the Tucson laboratory's techniques for testing bees' hygienic behavior may help bee breeders and keepers identify and replace queen bees that bear poor housekeepers. This could reduce damage done to bees by chalkbrood and other diseases such as American foulbrood, European foulbrood and sacbrood.

For more information, call Dennis Senft at (415) 486-3355.

- - - -

BUMPER WHEAT CROP As U.S. farmers bring in their third largest wheat harvest
PUSHES PRICES DOWN in history, the outlook now is for a season of record supplies and near record use as a result of strong exports. These factors create prospects for the lowest average farmgate price in five years, says USDA's Economic Research Service.

More acres were farmed this year. Harvested acres rose 8% and the average yield per acre was only .6 of a bushel below last year's record 39.4 bushels. This put the crop at 2.57 billion bushels, up 150 million from a year ago. The increase was enough to offset reduced carryin stocks and to put 1984/85 U.S. wheat supplies at a record of just under 4 billion bushels.

Sales and use in 1984/85 may be much stronger than had been expected at the outset of the season.

Exports and sales since mid-July are up 26% from last year, primarily because of heavy shipping to the Soviet Union and China, the two major U.S. wheat customers.

USSR commitments for purchases are up more than a third from last year, suggesting the second largest U.S./USSR wheat trade since 1972/73. Chinese buying picked up at harvest but has lagged from earlier expectations, mostly because of another record Chinese crop.

Total U.S. wheat exports for the season are forecast at 1.53 billion bushels, up 7% from last season and the second strongest ever.

Heavy early season use of wheat for feed contributed to increased domestic use. Short feed grain and plentiful wheat supplies during June-September upset the more typical premium prices of wheat over feed grains, resulting in record amounts of wheat being fed to livestock and poultry. However, the current large 1984 feed grain output should turn this situation around, limiting wheat feeding for the rest of the season. Wheat feeding for 1984/85 will be down slightly from a year ago.

Despite the bright outlook for demand, large supplies and the reduced loan rate dampen price prospects. Average farm prices during June-September were \$3.40 a bushel, compared with \$3.53 last year. For all of 1984/85, the season-average farm price may fall below last year's \$3.54 a bushel, settling between \$3.35 and \$3.55.

As the harvest begins in the Southern Hemisphere, it looks like 1984's world wheat production will be unique. At 506 million metric tons, it will top the never-before-reached 500-million mark. World stocks and world trade each may set a record of around 105 million tons. Large supplies in exporting nations will keep competition stiff this year, similar to 1983/84.

Winter wheat producers already have sown their 1985 crop. Although the wheat program requires idling less acreage than in 1984, the expectation for continued low prices may encourage increased participation in the program. Important to 1985's crop outlook will be this fall's planting delays in key Soft Red wheat producing areas and the condition of the wheat crop next spring.

For more information, call Allen Schienbein at (202) 447-8444.

FEED GRAINS Supplies of U.S. feed grains for 1984/85 are 13% larger than
PRICES LOWER last season. Grain use is expected to rise as exports go up 10%
and feed use 7%. While stocks will grow, they will remain well
below the burdensome levels of the past two years. Farm prices are expected to
be below averages for the last season.

This year's corn crop is estimated at 7.53 billion bushels, up from last year's
unusually small 4.17 billion. Feed and residual use of corn in 1983/84 was an
estimated 3.73 billion bushels, the smallest since 1976/77.

The latest sorghum crop is expected to total 813 million bushels, up 70% from
1983. October 1 stocks were 150 million below a year earlier.

Barley supplies are at a record high, while supplies of oats are at a near
record low. Barley farm prices are expected to average between \$2.20 and \$2.40
a bushel, compared with \$2.50 in 1983/84. Farm prices for oats are expected to
average between \$1.60 and \$1.80 a bushel, compared with \$1.69 last leason.

For more information, call Sam Evans at (202) 447-8444.

- - - -

COTTON SETS RECORD -- Large cotton crops in China and Pakistan have raised
world production to a record 80.7 million bales, 20% above last year. The
Chinese boosted their production to 25.3 million bales, more than twice their
1978/82 average. Pakistani production grew to 3.7 million bales to completely
recover from crops damaged last year by bad weather and insects.

For more information, call (202) 382-9494.

- - - -

EXPORTS RISE -- Bigger wheat and cotton shipments and higher corn and soybean
prices lifted U.S. agricultural exports to \$38 billion during fiscal 1984, 10%
above those for 1983. Volume remained near fiscal 1983's level of 145 million
tons, with increases in wheat and cotton shipments offsetting reduced soybean
product shipments.

For more information, contact Tom Warden at (202) 447-4863.

- - - -

SUGAR PRODUCTION TO DROP -- World sugar production for 1984/85 now is
projected at 97.5 million metric tons, down 2% from the May forecast. The new
figure compares with the estimate of 95.6 million tons produced in 1983/84.
World consumption during 1984/85 is estimated at 96.1 million tons, a rise of
only 500,000 tons from a year earlier.

For more information, call (202) 382-8878.

- - - -

OKLAHOMA FREE OF BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS -- Oklahoma is the 26th state to
eradicate bovine tuberculosis, announces Bert V. Hawkins, administrator of
USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

- - - -

'BOUT YOU 'N ME OVER TH' NATION Farm scenes aren't the first images to hit your mind's eye when talk turns to the highly-populated Northeast. But, agriculture in that part of the country is much bigger than often is realized, reminds June Sekoll, editor of COUNTRY FOLKS WEST, published in Palatine Bridge, N.Y.

One of June's first acts as the newly elected president of the Northeast Farm Communicators Association was to call and tell us how important Northeast farming really is. Now, she's preparing some facts on that subject, which we'll share with you in a later issue of the FARM PAPER LETTER.

Other new officers of the organization are Bill Paine of Montpelier, Vt., director of MILK PROMOTION SERVICES, INC., first vice president; Richard Arnold of Syracuse, N.Y., manager of CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, AGWAY, INC., second vice president; Vanna Gulfenschuch of NEF PUBLISHING CO., publisher of NEW ENGLAND FARMER and NORTHEAST FARMER, secretary-treasurer.

TOP NORTHEAST HONORS -- June also announced that the organization honored Tom Schwendlar of Syracuse "Northeast Farm Communicator of the Year." The communicators also named Schwendlar the winner of the Nor'Easter best printed general farm story and best printed story promoting Northeast agriculture. Both appeared in the SYRACUSE HERALD JOURNAL.

NEW JOB OPENING -- THE NEW FARM has an immediate opening for a new associate editor in the magazine's Emmaus, PA office. "Duties include regular magazine articles with an emphasis on livestock, editing a few departments and helping out with books and other special projects," said George DeVault, editor and publisher. For more information, contact DeVault at 33 E. Minor St., Emmaus, PA 18049. Or, call him at (215) 967-5171.

CHANGES AT THE FURROW -- On November 30, Ralph Reynolds will hang up his shingle at the FURROW and write "30" on a 25-year career with Deere & Company. To those of us who have watched Ralph's work over the years, his retirement is a reminder that we've seen a lot of agricultural information flow under the bridge.

Ralph joined THE FURROW staff in 1959, became editor in 1965 and has served as executive editor since 1973. Under his direction, THE FURROW has grown from a North American farm publication with limited overseas circulation to a truly worldwide magazine. The publication now is published in 12 languages and circulated in 49 countries. Altogether, the circulation of its 36 different editions comes close to 2 million.

On December 1, George Sollenberger will move up to executive editor of THE FURROW. George joined the publication in 1964. He has served the magazine in several editorial capacities, the most recent being editor of North American editions, the position he has held since 1970.



Clay Napier
Editor, FARM PAPER LETTER